

St. Louis River Area of Concern

*Projects in partnership to restore the river
and revitalize the community*

Restoring Wild Rice

Purpose

This project restores 275 acres of wild rice and is part of the plan to remove the Degraded Fish and Wildlife Habitat Impairment.

Wild rice, or *manoomin* in Ojibwe, has been a vital nutritional grain for indigenous people for centuries. It still plays a central role in the cultural life the Ojibwe people today. In the St. Louis River Estuary, wild rice is one of the most important plants and a key food source for waterfowl. It provides important habitat for fish and wildlife. The wild rice plant is more than just a food source: it also plays an important role in water quality by cycling nutrients and holding sediments in place.

Historically, the St. Louis River estuary may have sustained 2,000 to 3,000 acres of wild rice— one of the richest concentrations in the region. But over the past 125 years, industrial development, pollution, and logging nearly wiped it out. Now, only a few isolated pockets are found in the 12,000 acre estuary.

Background

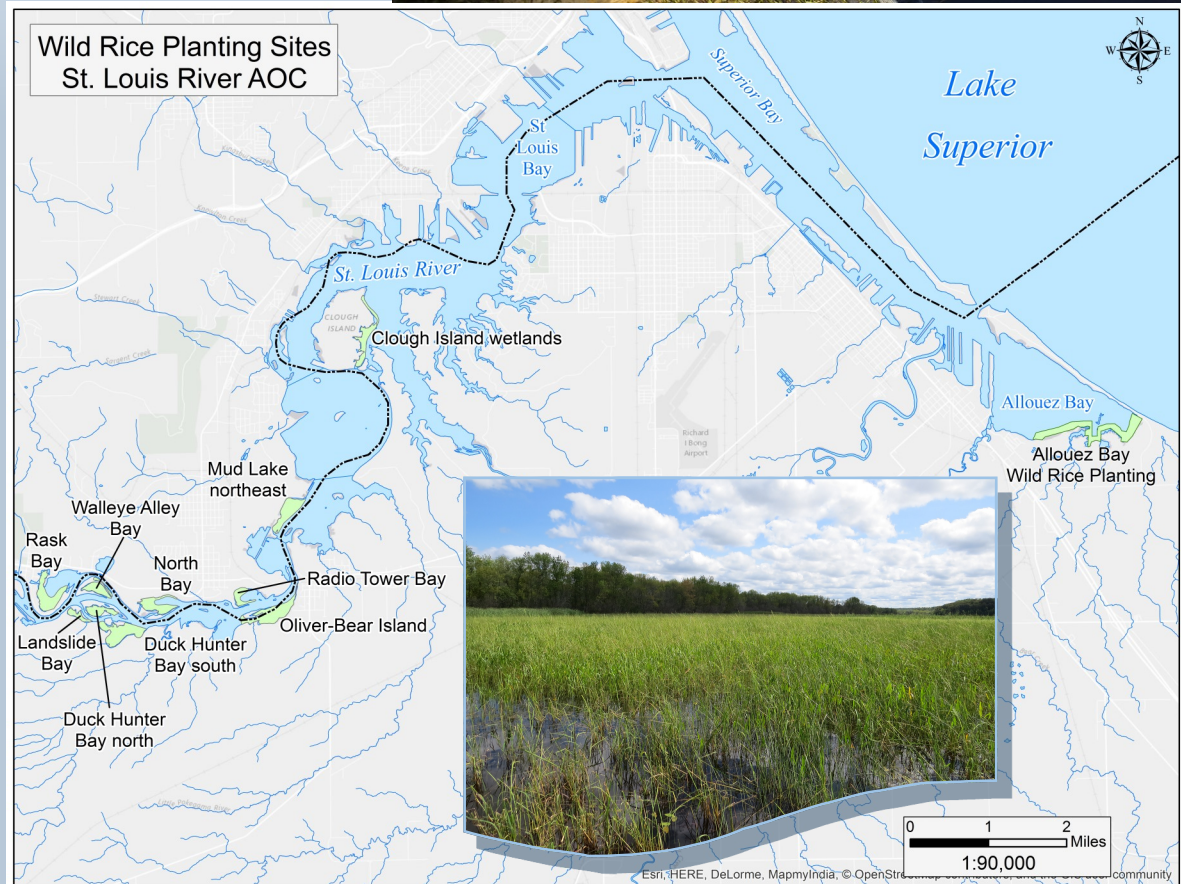
The Wild Rice Restoration Implementation Plan for the St. Louis River Estuary was completed in 2014 in cooperation with partners. The plan identified sites in the river that offer the best opportunities for successful restoration.

The goal is to restore at least 275 acres over the next 10 years to provide habitat and opportunities for wild rice harvest. This target represents the first step in a longer term goal of restoring wild rice to a greater abundance and distribution throughout the estuary.

The map shows areas where restoration is underway. Rice prefers wetland areas less than 4 feet deep. Restoration efforts include seeding, managing competing plants, protecting from geese until beds are established, and monitoring. Seeding is done in September and will be repeated at these sites annually for multiple years, which gives the rice a better chance to become established.



Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Natural Resources Department staff seeding wild rice. Photo: Derek Montgomery, MN Public Radio.



Status

Wild rice is an annual plant that grows from seed each year. Large scale seeding started in 2014. Success of seeding is determined by observing wild rice growth in the next season and future years. The restoration partnership has a goal of seeding over 200 acres every year. This fluctuates based on the rice crop and seed sources. Annual monitoring provides information on success of the restoration efforts and informs future management actions.

Importance and Harvest

Manoomin holds more nutrition than white rice, oats, barley, wheat or rye. It is low in fat and high in protein. Harvest is only allowed by traditional methods using a canoe and wooden ricing sticks. Rice abundance can vary widely from year to year, but a day spent ricing can yield more than 200 pounds of seed! On publicly accessible waterways, ricing can be practiced by anyone who purchases a harvest license from the DNR.

Partners

The Manoomin Restoration Partnership includes many entities:

- 1854 Treaty Authority
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission
- Lake Superior Research Institute
- Douglas County
- Ducks Unlimited
- Minnesota Land Trust
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Floating leaf stage (mid June)



Flowering stage (late July)



Seed kernels form (August– September)



Seed kernels after harvest



The wild rice plant has multiple stages throughout the growing season. The seed germinates under the ice and the plant emerges in June. Wild rice seeds fall off into the water when they ripen in late August and replenish the rice bed for the next season.



Office of Great Waters



To Learn More

Visit <http://dnr.wi.gov>, search "[St. Louis River AOC.](#)"

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